

State of California  
The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES  
Northern District

RECREATION USE SURVEY OF  
INDIAN CREEK, PLUMAS COUNTY

1995

Technical Information Report ND-96-2

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This report was prepared to summarize information collected under Work Order 1501-0100 to document recreation and fishery enhancement provided by a revised operation of Antelope Reservoir. This report has received only limited review; it is intended for internal use and should be considered preliminary and subject to revision.

May 1996

## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
SUMMARY .....	1
DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA .....	3
METHODS .....	7
Recreation Use Counts .....	7
Creel Census .....	7
RESULTS .....	9
Recreation Use .....	9
Creel Census Data and Angler Success .....	10
DISCUSSION .....	15
Limitations of Use Counts and Creel Census .....	15
Comparison of 1995 Results with Previous Surveys .....	15
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	21
REFERENCES .....	23

## TABLES

1	Recreation Hours by Activity, Indian Creek, Antelope Dam to Shim Flat-1990 .....	9
2	Estimated Recreation Hours by Activity, Upper Indian Creek, 1978-82, 1986, 1990, 1993 & 1995 .....	16
3	Estimated Recreation Hours by Activity, Flournoy Bridge to Shim Flat, 1990, 1993 & 1995 .....	17
4	Streamflow and Estimated Angler Use and Catch, Upper Indian Creek, 1978-82, 1986, 1990, 1993 & 1995 .....	18

## FIGURES

1	Antelope Reservoir and Indian Creek, Plumas County, 1995 .....	4
2	Indian Creek Visitor Origin by County Groups, 1995 .....	11
3	Indian Creek Angler Origin by County Groups, 1995 .....	13

## APPENDICES

I	Recreation Survey Schedule for Indian Creek, 1995 .....	25
II	1993 Use Count Schedule for Indian Creek .....	26
III	Length-Frequency of Censused Brown Trout, Indian Creek, 1995 .....	27
IV	Length-Frequency of Censused Rainbow Trout, Indian Creek, 1995 .....	28

## SUMMARY

A survey of streamside recreation along upper Indian Creek, Plumas County, was made in 1995. This survey was made to estimate the amount and types of recreation occurring with augmented flow conditions. Another primary objective was to provide supplemental data (creel census) following a study which measured emigration of trout from Antelope Lake during spill (Rischbieter 1996). The random sample survey combined roving use counts with interviews of anglers to gather information on recreation use, activities, visitor origin, and angler success.

There were an estimated 18,000 hours of recreation use on 11 miles of Indian Creek between Antelope Dam and Flourney Bridge from April 29 to November 15, 1995. The most frequently observed activities were camping, fishing, relaxing, and picnicking. Similar to past surveys, about 43 percent of the visitors and 40 percent of the anglers interviewed were from the northeast counties of California. The Sacramento Valley and San Francisco Bay Area were also well represented among visitors and anglers. Anglers creeled about 800 brown trout, 500 rainbow trout, and a few largemouth bass in 4,100 hours of fishing on this portion of creek.

An estimated total of 4,500 hours of recreation occurred along the six miles of Indian Creek from Flourney Bridge to Shim Flat. The few anglers censused reported 2 rainbow trout caught and 12 rainbows caught and released.

## DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

Indian Creek is a major tributary of the East Branch North Fork Feather River in Plumas County. The creek flows from Antelope Dam about 38 miles to its confluence with Spanish Creek near the junction of Highways 70 and 89, about 11 miles northwest of Quincy (Figure 1). The area has a rich history of gold mining, ranching, and lumber production. In recent decades, recreation use has increased rapidly, with water-related uses a major attraction. Employment in the area today is divided among services, government, and timber harvesting and processing. Indian and Genesee Valleys support large cattle ranches.

The survey reach included the 17 miles of Indian Creek beginning at Antelope Dam, elevation 4,900 feet, and ending at Shim Flat near Genesee Woods subdivision, elevation 3,600 feet. The 6-mile Genesee Valley reach was surveyed in 1990, 1993, and 1995 specifically to gather baseline information needed to evaluate a proposed stream rehabilitation project.

Below Antelope Dam, Indian Creek flows through a granitic canyon with stands of pine and fir, but short reaches are often meadowlike. It is closely followed by a paved road with wide pullouts for convenient stream access. A portion of the creek cuts through a deep and rugged canyon, accessible only by foot, before flowing into the upper part of Genesee Valley. All but the lower one mile of the upper 11-mile reach is within Plumas National Forest.

Between Flourney Bridge and the mouth of Little Grizzly Creek (Genesee Valley), Indian Creek flows through private ranch lands generally closed to public use. The creek gradient is very low in this reach. Below Little Grizzly Creek, Indian Creek flows through a large wooded flat called Shim Flat, which is U. S. Forest Service property. A dirt road leads across the flat to the creek at several secluded points. Black oak, ponderosa pine, and Douglas fir are the predominant species in this area. The paved county road only occasionally comes within sight of the creek in this reach and there

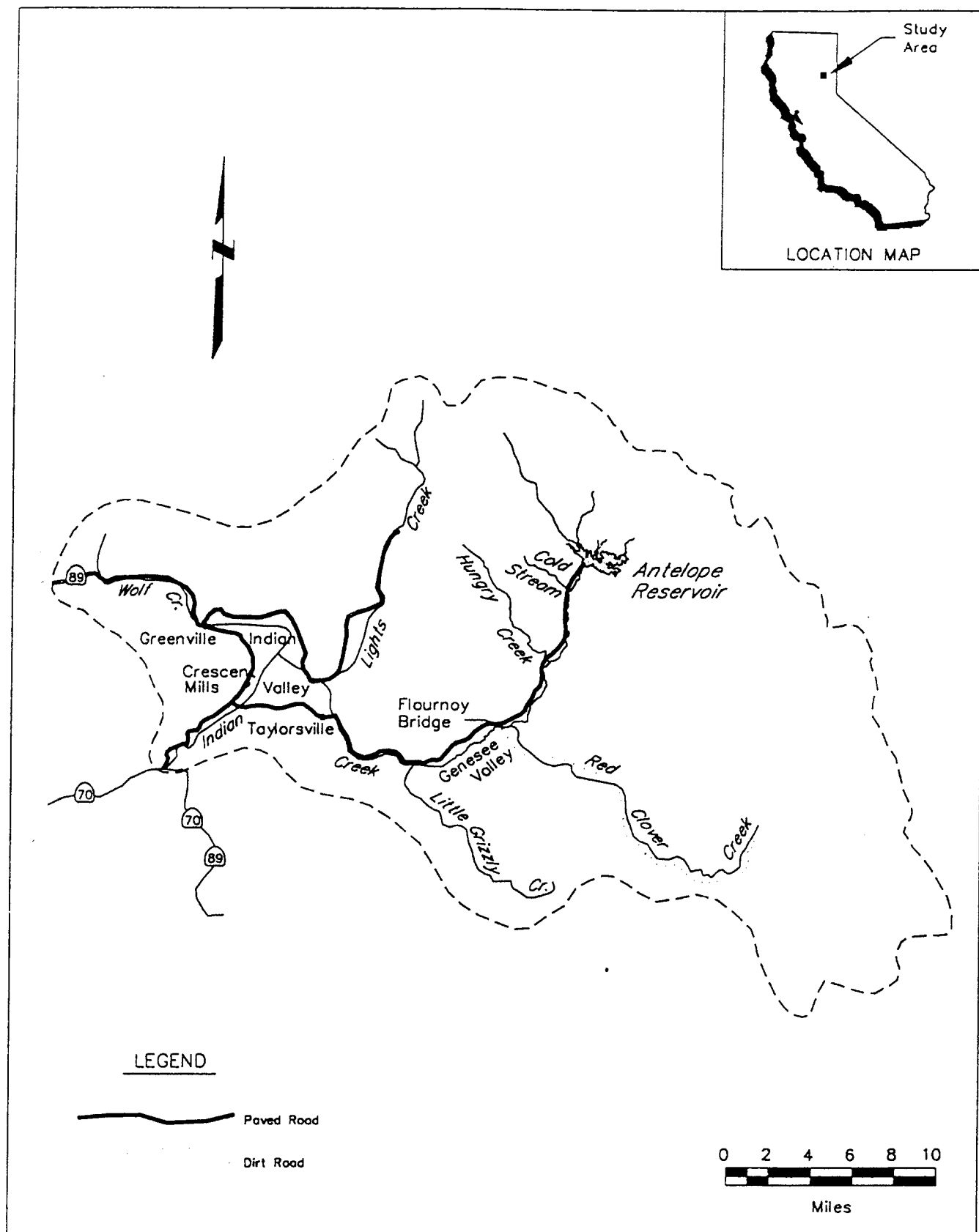


Figure 1 — Antelope Reservoir and Indian Creek,  
Plumas County, 1995

are no developed recreation facilities. The only public access points are at Flournoy Bridge, Genesee Bridge, and Shim Flat.

The upper 11 miles of the stream remains cold in summer and is slightly turbid due to deep-water outflow from the dam. Brown trout and rainbow trout dominate the fishery. Many large trout (mostly rainbows, some browns and brooks) and black bass (largemouth bass) typically enter the creek from Antelope Reservoir when it spills in spring. Antelope Reservoir filled in March 1995 and spilled for approximately 18 weeks. The release was controlled at 20 cfs throughout the rest of the year. Flow was reduced to 5 cfs for a week in September to allow for fish population sampling.

In March and April 1995, a fish migration study included the placement of a net barrier across the spillway of Antelope Reservoir. This net was in place for 50 days from the commencement of spill (March 9) until just before the beginning of fishing season (April 28). Although staff collected and released specimens of fishes twice daily, substantial mortality occurred and may have reduced early season angler success. Fish collected in the spillway included rainbow trout, Eastern brook trout, largemouth bass, black crappie, redear sunfish, green sunfish, and bluegill. These fish were marked for later identification and released into the creek.

In the 6-mile Genesee Valley reach, Indian Creek is characteristically clear and cool, but can experience elevated temperatures on hot days. Typical summer minimum flows are 30 - 40 cfs at Flournoy Bridge and probably remained higher this year. This reach typically has good fishing at times in the early season (before high water temperatures occur) for rainbow trout, Sacramento squawfish, and Sacramento sucker.

## METHODS

### Recreation Use Counts

Use counts were made on randomly selected dates within ten survey strata using the optimum allocation method described by Abramson and Tolladay (1959). Thirty days of the 201-day period from April 29 through November 15, 1995, were surveyed; both days of the opening weekend of trout season, 5 of 10 holiday weekend days, 11 of 139 weekdays, and 10 of 48 general weekend days, and both days of the opening weekend of the general deer season. Five one-hour counts of recreation use were made in the study area each day at regular periods, scheduled according to the number of daylight hours (Appendices I and II).

The surveys were made from a vehicle or on foot, as necessary, to check access areas and recreation sites. Recreationists (and their vehicles) were counted and recorded by recreation activity. The five daily counts were totaled and multiplied by factors that accounted for recreation use during the daylight periods not counted. Similarly, the resulting daily figures were expanded to estimate total recreation hours for all days in each stratum. Adding the stratum totals provided an estimate of recreation hours for the study period.

### Creel Census

Anglers along Indian Creek were contacted on 30 days to determine fishing success. The county of residence and length of time spent fishing so far that day was recorded for each angler contacted. Creeled fish were counted, measured (fork length to nearest 0.5 centimeter [cm]), and identified to species.

To determine total catch, the catch per hour was multiplied by estimated hours of fishing for each stratum. Total weight of trout caught was calculated from estimated total catch and length-weight data from Indian Creek trout (Brown 1994).

## RESULTS

### Recreation Use

Total recreation use on Indian Creek, Antelope Dam to Shim Flat, was estimated at 22,500 recreation hours ( $\pm$  4,500 hours) for the period April 29 to November 15, 1995. More than 81 percent of this use was upstream of Flournoy Bridge. Based on counts of recreationists, camping was the most common activity, followed by fishing, relaxing, and miscellaneous activities (Table 1). Use counts reflect what recreationists were doing when seen and the number of hours spent on each major activity, but did not provide data on other activities that people pursued at other times during their stay.

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Table 1. Recreation Hours by Activity, Indian Creek, Antelope Dam to Shim Flat - 1995

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Recreation Hours</u>		<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>
	<u>Upper Indian Creek</u>	<u>Genesee Valley</u>		
Camping	8,200	900	9,100	40
Fishing	4,100	600	4,700	21
Miscellaneous*	2,300	2200	4,500	20
Relaxing	2,400	700	3,100	14
Picnicking	<u>1,000</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>1,100</u>	<u>5</u>
Total	18,000	4,500	22,500	100

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\* Includes beach use/swimming, sightseeing, children playing, gold seeking, and walking.

In addition to the use counts, 124 interviews of recreationists were conducted during the 1995 season, representing 385 people. The interviews provided more detailed information on activity participation and additional information on visitor characteristics. About 68 percent of the recreationists interviewed said they fished during their visit to Indian Creek, and about 75 percent said they were relaxing. Other activities included

picnicking (39 percent), sightseeing (13 percent), walking for pleasure (4 percent), swimming/wading (4 percent), gold seeking (2 percent), and bicycle or motorcycle or off road vehicle use (3 percent). About 4 percent of the people interviewed mentioned miscellaneous other activities. These percentages total over 100 percent because many recreationists engaged in more than one activity during their visit.

About 57 percent of the visitors camped along Indian Creek, 29 percent were day users and returned home at night, and 14 percent stayed overnight somewhere in the area, but not at Indian Creek. Most of these camped at Antelope Reservoir, but a few stayed with friends or relatives in the area, at motels or resorts, private campgrounds, or summer cabins.

#### Creel Census Data and Angler Success

During the 1995 trout season, 233 anglers were contacted between Antelope Dam and Flournoy Bridge. They had fished 409 hours, with a recorded catch of 88 brown trout (Salmo trutta) and 37 rainbow trout (Oncorhynchus mykiss). No Eastern brook trout (Salvelinus fontinalis) were recorded. In addition, a total of 194 trout were reported caught, or reported to have been caught and released. Total angling use between Antelope Dam and Flournoy Bridge was estimated at 4,100 hours ( $\pm$  1,100 hours) or 1,850 angler days, with an estimated catch of 800 brown trout and 500 rainbow trout. Based on reported catch and release, as many as 3,300 additional trout may have been caught and released. Other species of fish observed or reported to have been caught this year included largemouth bass, bluegill, and redear sunfish.

An additional 23 anglers were contacted between Flournoy Bridge and Shim Flat. They had fished 45.5 hours and kept only 2 rainbow trout, although a total of 12 rainbow trout were reported caught and released. The relatively low use (about 600 hours in 1995) and low angler success rate does not allow meaningful estimates of total catch in this area.

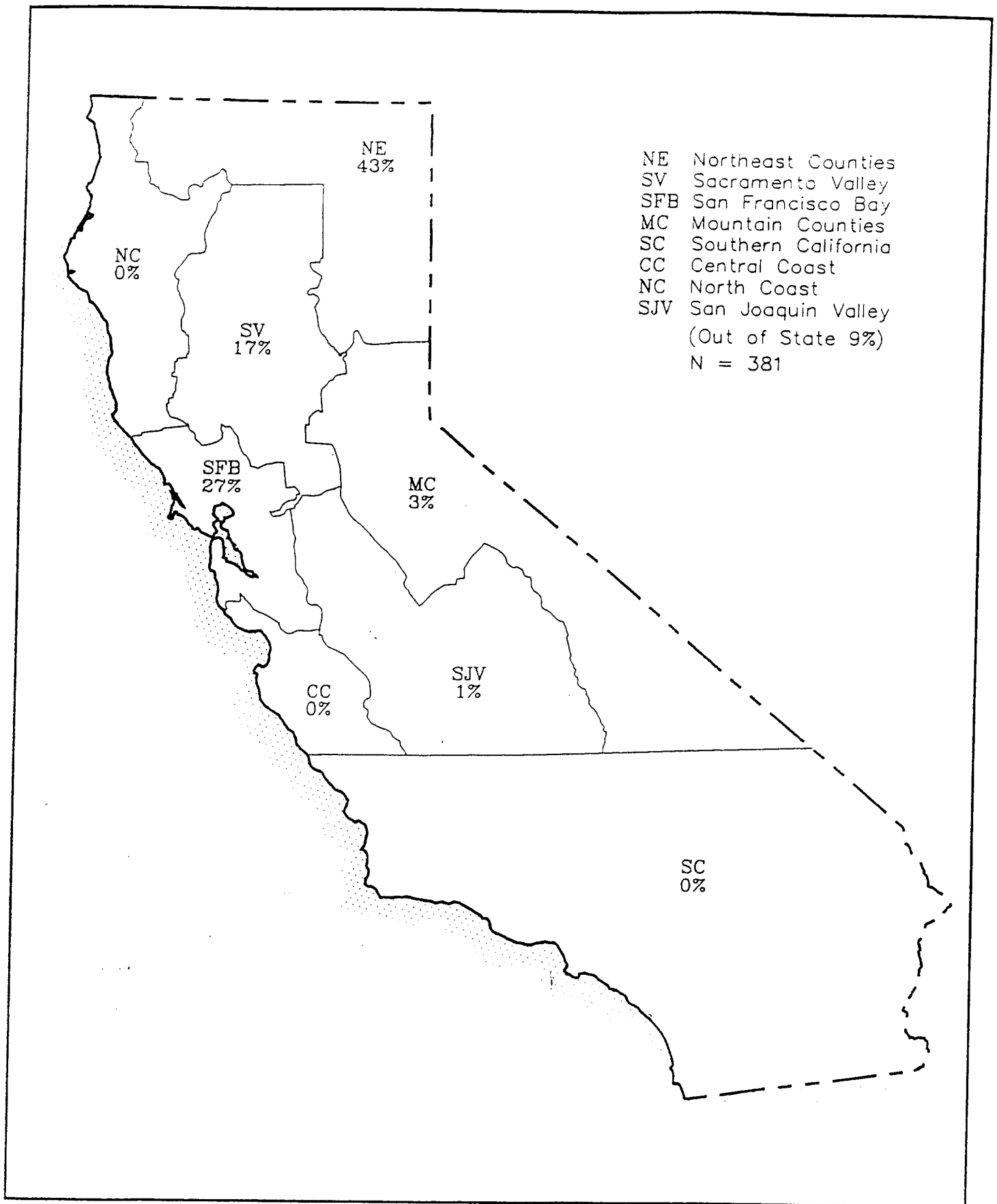


Figure 2 - Indian Creek Visitor Origin by County Groups  
1995

The mean length of brown trout caught during 1995 was 25.5 cm (10.0 inches [in]) with a range of 15 to 36 cm (5.9 to 14.2 in) (Appendix III). The mean length of rainbow trout was 32.9 cm (13.0 in) with a range of 21 to 43 cm (8.3 to 16.9 in) (Appendix IV). An estimated 390 lb of brown trout and 560 lb of rainbow trout were caught.

Indian Creek angler origin was similar to previous years; most of the anglers came from the northeast counties (40 percent), Sacramento Valley area, and the San Francisco Bay area (Figure 3). Overall, about 55 percent of the anglers censused fished with bait, 15 percent with lures, 10 percent with flies, and about 20 percent fished with some combination of these methods, mostly bait and lures.

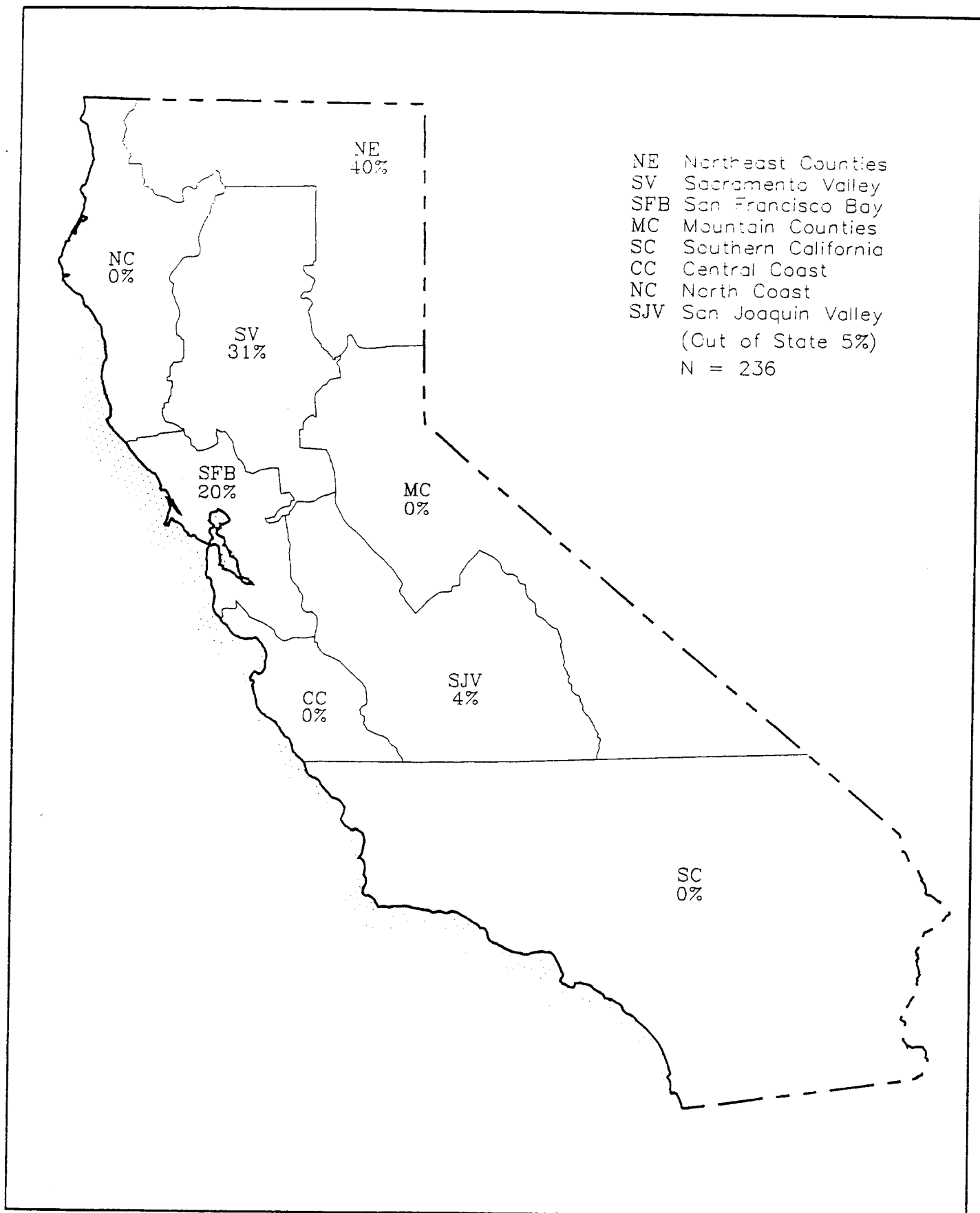


Figure 3 - Indian Creek Angler Origin by County Groups  
1995

## DISCUSSION

Understanding the limitations of the recreation use survey and creel census helps put the data obtained in perspective. This section describes the survey limitations and compares data from previous years with 1995 data.

### Limitations of Use Counts and Creel Census

Most recreationists on the creek were readily observed during the use counts. Vehicle access points were checked on each count, but people were not found for some vehicles. Vehicles of U. S. Forest Service workers, loggers, and other non-recreationists often park along the road in this reach of Indian Creek, making vehicle counts a poor index of recreation use. We observed wood cutters, truck drivers, and U. S. Forest Service employees working along Indian Creek during the summer. We did not include them in the estimates of use because they generally did not engage in recreation along the creek. About 10 percent of the estimated fishing use was represented in the creel census.

### Comparison of 1993 Results with Previous Surveys

The first three surveys of Indian Creek (1978-80) covered 38 miles from Antelope Dam to the confluence with Spanish Creek. In 1981, 1982, and 1986, the survey included only the 11 miles of the creek below Antelope Dam. The current survey covered 17 miles from Antelope Dam to Shim Flat near Genesee Woods, as did the 1990 and 1993 surveys. A comparison of data from all nine years (Table 2) illustrates patterns and changes that have occurred in general recreation, fishing, and angler success in the upper reach (Antelope Dam to Flourney Bridge).

Table 2. Estimated Recreation Hours by Activity, Upper Indian Creek, 1978-82, 1986, 1990, 1993 and 1995<sup>1/</sup>

Activity	Year								
	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1986	1990	1993	1995
Fishing	7,000	3,400	8,800	3,600	13,500	7,600	6,200	6,200	4,100
Camping	5,600	7,700	8,000	4,500	14,500	9,700	5,700	11,500	8,200
Relaxing	4,200	5,200	2,600	2,000	3,000	5,300	1,300	4,000	2,400
Picnicking	300	500	700	800	1,400	200	100	100	1,000
Gold Seeking	300	200	400	1,600	600	1,900	1,300	2,500	100
Miscellaneous	<u>1,200</u>	<u>1,000</u>	<u>1,700</u>	<u>1,000</u>	<u>2,600</u>	<u>2,300</u>	<u>1,100</u>	<u>4,200</u>	<u>2,200</u>
Total	18,600	18,000	22,200	13,500	35,600	27,000	15,700	28,500	18,000

1/ Source: DWR Technical Information Report Nos. 79-1, 80-1, 81-1, 82-1, 83-1, 87-1, 90-1, 94-1, and this report. This table includes only data for the upper 11 miles of Indian Creek, Antelope Dam to Flournoy Bridge.

The previous two surveys of "middle" Indian Creek (Flournoy Bridge to Shim Flat; 1990, 1993) reflected a much lower total recreation use than this year (Table 3). No single activity appeared to be responsible for the 1995 increase in the "miscellaneous" category. There appear to be large percentage differences for all of the individual activities, but observed use is too low for such comparisons to be statistically meaningful. Comparison to previous survey years (1977-80) is also not meaningful, due to the fact that in previous survey years the survey reach included Indian Creek all the way to Taylorsville Park.

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Table 3. Recreation Hours by Activity, "Middle" Indian Creek,  
Flournoy Bridge to Shim Flat - 1995

<u>Activity</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1995</u>
Camping	500	300	900
Fishing	400	100	600
Miscellaneous*	100	500	2,300
Relaxing	300	100	700
Total	1,300	1,000	4,500

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\* Includes beach use/swimming, picnicking, sightseeing, children playing, walking, and other miscellaneous activities.

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Nine years of surveys, a period that included a wide range of streamflow conditions, have revealed that angling success is often higher and more anglers are attracted to Indian Creek in years when Antelope Reservoir spills and summer flows are maintained at 20 cfs, than in years with low flows (Table 4). Anglers expect that rainbow trout will leave the reservoir when it spills and fishing will be good downstream. The catch per hour and total catch of rainbow trout usually roughly reflect the number of trout entering the stream at the time of spill, and the recent lower rainbow catch reflects reduced reservoir planting since 1992. Fishing success for brown trout has normally remained about the same irrespective of angling pressure.

After the spilling ends, the higher maintained flows make the stream appear better for fishing and increased angler use continues. However, the use and catch rate in 1995 was unusually low. This past year, the outflow of water from Antelope Reservoir was the highest ever (peaking at 1,850 cfs). Unusually high outflows were sustained for several weeks at the beginning of the season, causing the waters in Indian Creek to be extremely high and discolored, and resulting in poor fishing conditions. This was the

Table 4. Streamflow and Estimated Angler Use and Take  
Upper Indian Creek, 1978-82, 1986 and 1990<sup>1/</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Streamflow Conditions</u>	<u>Brown Trout</u>			<u>Rainbow Trout</u>	
		<u>Angler # Hours</u>	<u>BN Caught</u>	<u>Catch/ Hour</u>	<u># RT Caught</u>	<u>Catch/ Hour</u>
1978	Spill 46 days and 20 cfs	7,000	3,465	0.50	1,400	0.20
1979	Spill 20 days and 10 cfs	3,400	1,330	0.39	410	0.12
1980	Spill 177 days and 20 cfs	8,800	2,950	0.34	2,835	0.32
1981	No spill and 10 cfs	3,600	1,400	0.39	200	0.05
1982	Spill 237 days and 20 cfs	13,500	4,300	0.32	4,780	0.35
1986	Spill 123 days and 20 cfs	7,600	2,700	0.35	2,500	0.33
1990	No spill and 10 cfs	6,200	2,120	0.34	1,830	0.30
1993	Spill 102 days and 20 cfs	6,200	1,900	0.31	1000	0.16
1995	Spill 154 days and 20 cfs	4,100	800	0.19	500	0.12

1/ Source: DWR Technical Information Report Nos. 79-1, 80-1, 81-1, 82-1, 83-1, 87-1, 90-1, 94-1 and this report. This table includes only data for the upper 11 miles of Indian Creek, Antelope Dam to Flournoy Bridge.

likely cause of a low catch rate through much of the season, although lower catch/success in 1995 may be partly attributable to an increased rate of catch and release. It is not known if the high frequency of catch and release reported in 1995 reflects a change in angler sentiment, or just an abundance of small fish in the fishery.

In recent surveys, most of the exceptionally large fish observed in the creel census were caught on opening weekend or early in the season. In 1995, due to record high flows, fishing success was rather low on opening weekend and through the early part of the season. The opening weekend usually has the highest angling use of the year, (typically 12-20 percent of the annual use) but often not the highest fishing success. Local anglers (Plumas and Lassen County residents), who presumably know Indian Creek better than other anglers, are somewhat more successful in catching trout than residents of other counties.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Tim Drury collected data on several days and Phil Huckobey assisted the authors on the counts and some data entry. Thanks to Mike Serna for preparing the graphs, Lori Miles who typed the text and tables, and a special thanks to Ralph Hinton for his help on the opening day survey and his invaluable comments during preparation of this manuscript.

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# APPENDIX I

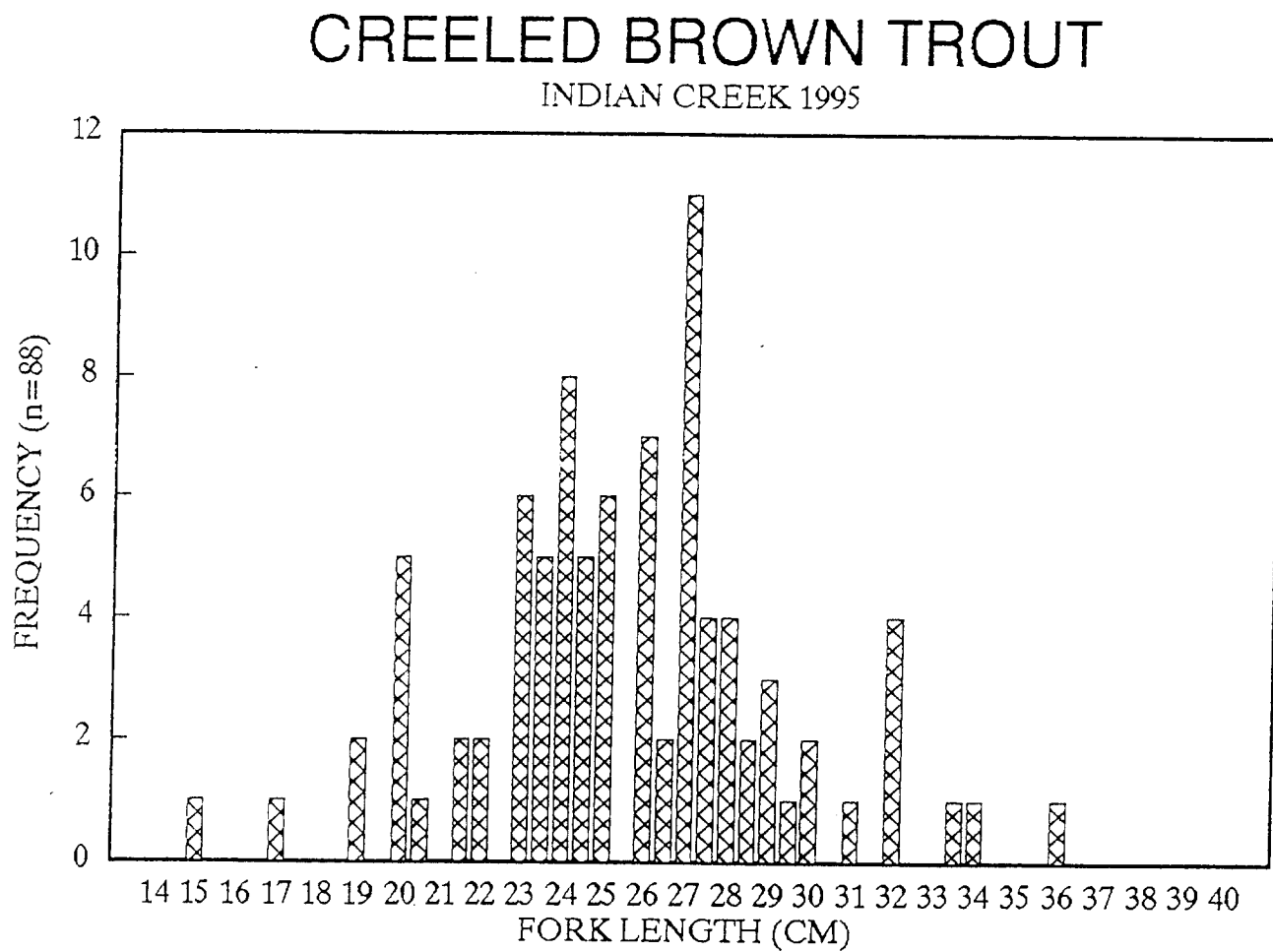
## RECREATION SURVEY SCHEDULE FOR INDIAN CREEK, PLUMAS COUNTY APRIL 29, 1995, TO NOVEMBER 15, 1995

<u>Indian Creek Survey Dates</u>	Holiday = HD Weekend = WE <u>Weekday = WD</u>	<u>Survey Strata</u>
April 29	WE	I
April 30	WE	I
May 1	WD	III
May 14	WE	IV
May 18	WD	III
May 27	HD	II
May 28	HD	II
June 4	WE	IV
June 17	WE	IV
June 23	WD	III
June 24	WE	IV
June 29	WD	III
July 1	HD	IX
July 4	HD	IX
July 6	WD	V
July 15	WE	VI
July 24	WD	V
July 30	WE	VI
August 6	WE	VI
August 9	WD	V
August 23	WD	V
September 3	HD	IX
September 8	WD	VII
September 17	WE	VIII
October 5	WD	VII
October 7	WE	X
October 8	WE	X
October 21	WE	VIII
October 28	WE	VIII
November 9	WD	VII

## APPENDIX II

### 1995 USE COUNT SCHEDULE FOR INDIAN CREEK

<u>Date</u>	<u>Daylight Hours</u>	<u>Use Count</u>		<u>Creel Census Time (approx.)</u>
		<u>Count</u>	<u>Time</u>	
April 30 PDT	15-1/2	1st	0730-0830	0800-1200
		2nd	1000-1100	1500-1900
		3rd	1300-1400	
		4th	1530-1630	
		5th	1830-1930	
May-August PDT	16-1/2	1st	0700-0800	0800-1300
		2nd	1000-1100	1400-1900
		3rd	1300-1400	
		4th	1600-1700	
		5th	1900-2000	
September PDT	14	1st	0730-0830	0900-1300
		2nd	1000-1100	1400-1800
		3rd	1230-1330	
		4th	1500-1600	
		5th	1730-1830	
October PDT	13	1st	0800-0900	0900-1300
		2nd	1000-1100	1400-1800
		3rd	1230-1330	
		4th	1500-1600	
		5th	1700-1800	
November PST	12	1st	0730-0830	0800-1200
		2nd	0930-1030	1300-1700
		3rd	1130-1230	
		4th	1330-1430	
		5th	1530-1630	



## CREELED RAINBOW TROUT

INDIAN CREEK 1995

